LITTLE BLUE BOOK NO. 410
Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

Amorous Misadventures

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Translated from the original French by

Keene Wallis

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AMOROUS MISADVENTURES

I. MADAME PARAGON

You must picture a tall woman, admirably proportioned.

She really was not five feet four inches in height, but her noble air and stately carriage gave her the appearance of great stature while leaving her all the graces of medium size.

Her facial beauty was equally composed of serenity and majesty tempered by a prettiness very piquant, very French. Her complexion was animated white rather than high color; her hair fine, ash-blond and silky; her brows were arched and full and seemed to be black; her beautiful blue eyes, veiled by long lashes, gave her that angelic and modest air which was the greatest charm of her beauty; her voice was timid, soft, sonorous, going to the soul; her bearing voluptuous and decent; her breast classical, each demi-globe almost horizontal with her shoulders; the hand soft without being plump; the arm perfect; the leg such as the finest of beaux might boast; and the foot the most delicate, of the best conformation that a pretty woman ever had.

She dressed with exquisite taste which was always admired. She seemed to impart to the simplest adornment that irresistible charm which the girdle of Venus was fabled to possess. She could have worn the most bizarre

stuff modishly. An affable, engaging manner was the climax of her charms, it made her cherished when identity of sex did not compel adoration.

Such was Colette C——, my Madame Paragon, on her arrival from Paris. After all the visitors had gone away, I remained lost in admiration; motionless; seeing, hearing, only her. I was standing, unobserved, in the dark passage between the bookshop and the parlor.

Madame Paragon said to Toinette, who was helping her to disrobe:

"What you have told me of my young compatriot pleases me greatly. I see that he is a good boy, the soul of honor."

"Oh, madame! there never was such a good boy. He is awfully honorable."

"I am interested in him doubly, as a pupil in our home and as the son of my father's friend. Where is he?"

I came to, at these words, and entered. They thought I had been in the shop all this time.

"Monsieur Nicolas," said the mistress to me, "come here. You are the son of a friend of my father. Deserve to be our own. My husband is well pleased with you. So is the foreman. I am gratified, because, you know, it was I who proposed to your parents that they apprentice you to us. I knew of your little quarrels with your brothers. Perhaps you were in the wrong. But you are young, and I suppose young men must commit some follies in order to know better later on."

While speaking thus she was hunting for something in her bag.

"I received the letter which you wrote me for Edmee. That is how I knew you were here."

She drew out a silver watch and gave it to me, saying, "A good workman like you will always wish to be punctual. This is yours."

I did not know what to do with myself. A watch for me! I was drunk with joy at receiving the present, and especially at receiving it from Madame Paragon. What glory for me! What pleasure for my parents! and this thought was not that which flattered me the least. My gratitude, my intense emotion, must have been quite perceptible. My expressions were so extravagant, so incoherent, that they made Colette smile.

Toinette finished disrobing her. She was simply in her corset and skirt. I admired her, devoured all her charms, but with an air of innocence, of naiveté, which was an air only, for my senses were boiling.

In a moment when Toinette was busy arranging something, Colette gave me her "respectful" to place with her other garments. I hid myself to kiss it, but Toinette saw me. I perceived finally, of myself, that I had better retire.

On seeing Madame Paragon I adored her. If I had known Colette first, in the perfect development of my heart, instead of Jeannette Rousseau, it is Colette C—— whom I should have adored only. But as I had merely glimpsed her from afar until after I had had some acquaintance not only with love but with pleasure, and especially with the vices of the

city, Colette, my divinity, was adored less purely. Desire was mingled with the sentiment of tenderness. I saw her charms more than her virtues, because my heart did not always desire that hers should be pure, whereas I had always desired in Jeannette as much virtue as love.

The cause, my dear reader, is not the less merit of Colette; it is that she was married and Jeannette was single. All things equal, I should have loved Colette the more deeply, ardently, and purely. And the proof is that I have often respected her wifely virtue, although her title of wife sometimes put me in a fury.

I began by being jealous of Monsieur. It seemed to me that he was unworthy of a happiness which he did not feel as I should have felt it. In all the romances I read and reread I saw Colette. She was the illustration and lent to the heroine a charm above imagination. I conceived by Colette how much the heroine must have been loved. If my heart had not been affected by the examples which I had daily under my eyes, the image of Colette would have been a talisman which would have guaranteed me against the corruption of vice. But having already tasted the fruit of the forbidden tree, I was forever imagining Colette in the arms of the vigorous C——, who profaned all her charms. My senses kindled, and their furies annihilated the virtuous sentiments of my heart, honest, tender, and more sensitive than one commonly has with a fiery temperament.

What reassured me was that Monsieur did not seem to me to be madly loved. So I went on loving Colette to an excessively dangerous

degree. But evidently there was not the remotest possibility of winning a woman so virtuous—who was my protectress. Burning with desire, I began to look about me for a connection to temper an ardor which had become intolerable.

The example I had given Toinette served me as a curb in the presence of that young girl, but we had for neighbors some very engaging persons: to the right, the three Baron sisters, Madelon, Berdon, and Manon; to the left, that pretty Prudhot, a grocer's daughter, of whom I shall tell a tale elsewhere.

My vigor, my youth, my particular constitution, aided by the morals of the city, did not permit me to see these young persons daily and at close range without desire; and far from trying to keep my heart pure and faithful to her whom I adored, as I sometimes resolved after reading a romance, I deliberately fostered an attraction to these presumably more accessible beauties in order to diminish the torment of my secret passion.

But I was restrained by my timidity. How was I to express and satisfy my appetites, with young persons whom I saw only on their doorsteps, to whom I could speak only in front of everybody? I was consumed. Ah, if I had not been so virtuous with Toinette!

I was, moreover, in a continual indecision. When I saw my neighbors or Toinette, I desired them, but the moment Madame Paragon appeared, I was more charmed than annoyed by the obstacles which had kept me away from the others.

I sighed, I breathed, only for my goddess. With what pleasure I executed her least orders! How I flew at a nod! I tried to guess her unspoken wishes. There was no effort in this; it was delicious enjoyment. I could have had so many motives for behaving thus that the charming woman could hardly suspect the real one.

My taste for reading, my lack of it for wine, gambling, all the ordinary dissipations of my age, augmented the esteem of Madame Paragon, She admired me as a unique character who must one day do marvelous things, being already a sensible man in the season of folly. She did not know that this was not virtue in me but only a penchant for women, penchant, in truth, better reasoned than with other men, because to satisfy it more completely I sacrificed to it all other inclinations. So the very thing which exposed Madame Paragon and ought to have rendered her severe was that which gave her security, which rendered her indulgent, kind, confiding.

But we must bring some order into this important narrative.

The taste of which I spoke, for reading, for every sort of instruction, had the usual cause. I was born to owe everying to women: pleasure, pain, and death itself. I wished by real merit to render myself worthy of their tenderness.

So I remained in the house Sundays and holidays to translate and study. I took all the chores on myself, generously enabling my fellow-apprentice Bardet; the domestic, the cook,

Toinette, to go out for the afternoon. This conduct must have made me beloved by the first two persons. As for Toinette, equally by inclination and by the orders of her mistress, this pretty girl was for me an attentive sister.

When Madame Paragon returned she always found me in the shop or in the parlor. I answered the villagers who came to look for books, and I rendered accounts of the receipts to the mistress.

"It is not worth your trouble to stay," she told me sometimes. "Close up and go have a good time."

I responded with gratitude, and continued to stay indoors. I would not have given for a crown the pleasure of seeing her when she returned alone during the afternoon.

She sat down in front of the fire and with apparent approval asked me the nature of the literary work and the reading to which I was devoting Sundays and holidays and all my spare time, even the dinner hour. I answered that I was translating Terence and in addition was studying prosody and the logic of Port Royal.

"What do you read for amusement?"

"The romances of Madame Villedieu enchant me. However, I prefer the Princess of Cleves to them. I do not like Don Quixote. It fatigues me—but the episodes are charming! I have devoured Robinson Crusoe as far as the Dialogues, and I cannot stand his Visions."

Madame Paragon smiled at my discourse and assumed an air of familiar good nature which enchanted me.

"You do not read . . . *free* books?"

I blushed as I answered,

"Well, I have read the tales of La Fontaine. Once I put my nose into them I couldn't get it out. I had to go the whole way. I was carried along in spite of myself."

"Oh, you must resist a charm like that. If I were master, there wouldn't be any of those books here. I have heard Monsieur say himself that they spoil one's taste. Those who become addicted to them find only insipidity in honest and serious works."

"Oh, madame, that is not true at all!" I exclaimed, with an eagerness which pleased Colette, "because I read good books with no less pleasure. I even feel a sort of contempt for the free authors like Grecourt and Vergier whom I have read also."

"You will do well not to read them any more."

"No, madame, I am going to busy myself translating the Latin poets, at the same time reading our best French poets, like Racine and Boileau."

"That is good. Will you read me some of your translation of Terence?"

I ran to get my copy book, and I read her the entire first two acts of the Woman of Andros. She seemed very well pleased with it, and especially glad that I should continue to pursue my studies in her home without neglecting my profession.

"You have found," she added, "the true method of preserving morals, and if you continue thus to the end you will have surpassed my hopes. I have known you for a long time. You

have always interested me, but various errors have given me some anxieties. This is the way you must quiet them."

Never before had I been so happy. I had never known the like of these sweet moments, never should know them but with her. But Madame Paragon was too voluptuously beautiful, and I too inflammable, for such a familiarity not to become extremely dangerous. This young person united all the charms of nature, of a provocative adornment, and of an exquisite, virginal propriety.

After this discussion she had me read her the tragedy *Zaire*. Monsieur de Voltaire was an author whom I did not know yet, his works not being in the house. Madame Paragon had seen this play presented in Paris during her first trip, and she was still under the spell which Zaire and Gaussin had put upon her.

As I read, Madame Paragon leaned on the back of my chair, following me with her eyes. Sometimes she gave me the tone of the actor or of the actress whom she had heard. One of her arms rested lightly on my shoulder, burning me and imparting to my voice a sonorous timbre tremulous with emotion.

My fay and I were all in tears.

The drama finished, I laid the book on the table. I was in a mood which would have given me, two years later, the boldness to speak.

But when my passion would have become potent enough to loosen my tongue, Manon Bourgoin, the most intimate friend of Madame Paragon, came in.

"I am still all worked up," the virtuous lady

said to her. "Monsieur Nicolas has just been reading me *Zaire*."

"He must be a good reader."

"He puts so much feeling into it!"

"Does he? He shall read us a little manuscript poem of which my papa has just received six cantos. There are to be eighteen, but these are all we have yet. It is by the same author. Bourgoin tried to read it, but he has no more feeling than a pig. Let us see, now, Monsieur Nicolas, how much poetry you have in you."

She went and got a quarto, opened it, and searched for a passage. It was Corneille's *Le Cid*, and she showed me the monologue of Don Diegue: "Oh madness! oh despair! abhorr'd old age!"

I had already read this drama, which I had found, according to my taste at that time, the best of Corneille, and I knew this monologue by heart, so I read it with heat.

Manon Bourgoin was enchanted.

"He shall read us La Pucelle!"

The conversation was interrupted here by the arrival of the foreman, Manon's cousin. Monsieur C— came in at half-past seven, and I ran off and shut myself up in the print shop till eight-fifteen, when they were at table and ready to have supper. I thus economized the least instants for my dear translation of Terence, which, though it was only a clumsy schoolboy version, had just brought me a greater reward than a good book brings to really gifted authors.

I could not work. Madame Paragon, her

many kindnesses, her sympathetic words, filled my memory and my imagination.

Reader, where was I? I stray off frequently. One memory calls to another, and I hardly know where they are leading me.

Madame Paragon came downstairs with Toinette. I rose, ashamed as if I had been found out in my desires, and went up to my study. Looking back through the glazed door I perceived that Colette was reading some words of adoration I had written. I trembled. I wanted to run away.

I sat down at my little desk, but instead of working I gave myself over to thoughts of Colette. Finding myself bolder, now that I was out of sight of her, I congratulated myself that she had read the words, *I adore you*

"She knows it, at least," I thought.

But when the bell rang for dinner, my timidity returned. I descended like a criminal going before his judge.

We dined alone, the mistress and I. Monsieur C— and the foreman, both freemasons, were at lodge in the country, and Manon Bourgoin profited by the absence of her father, master of the lodge, to eat, *et cetera!* with Gaudet d'Arras, tête-à-tête, concealing nothing from her mother.

I lowered my eyes and remained standing. Madame Paragon said to me, but in an interesting tone, which I still can hear, "Will you take your place?"

She was seated. I placed myself at her side.

"Oh, no. Facing me. There are only we two."

She served me. I ate in silence. She did not speak. I was in a state difficult to describe: now vexed at my boldness, now glad of it. Finally Madame Paragon said to me, "Why do you not eat, as you are at table?"

I answered, "Yes, madame," without knowing what I was saying.

"You are dreaming?"

"Yes, madame."

"Were you at high mass?"

"Yes, madame."

"Have you had some of the blessed bread?"

"You know that it is not distributed behind the choir."

"No, I did not know. Here, then, is a piece."

She showed me the wafer on a silver plate. I obliged her to give it to me with her own hands.

"You are concentrating on something?"

"Oh, very much, madame."

I wrapped the piece of blessed bread in some paper.

"You want to give it away?"

"I, give it away? God forbid!"

"What do you want to do with it?"

"Keep it, madame, as one keeps—that which one receives from persons—whom one respects infinitely."

She smiled and blushed as she said to me, "It is not a thing like that—"

Oh, how I was tempted to say to her what I had written, *I adore you!* and run away.

I remembered it was her birthday. I must

make her my compliment. How I wished I had a rich bouquet to present to her! But I had nothing, not even my heart, for it was hers already. On rising from the table I stammered, palpitating:

"On this day of the year the masterpiece of Nature saw the light for the first time!"

I looked at Madame Paragon, who was getting ready to go to vespers. I could hardly speak, I was so agitated. She said to me:

"You are troubled?"

"I—know, madame, that today is your birthday; it is your festival rather than that of Saint Colette . . ."

"Oh . . . I was born at two o'clock in the afternoon. I shall be in the church at that instant and I will praise God for the twenty-third anniversary of the first moment of my existence."

"Ah, madame, and so will I."

"Today is not your birthday?"

"Yours!"

"Thank you."

"Oh, if I had a bouquet!"

She smiled.

"The wish suffices me."

"Madame, if I were a god, I would give you the most beautiful of the stars. They say it is Venus. Every time I see it, I shall think, 'That star belongs to Madame Colette.'"

She blushed.

"That is very nice, Monsieur Nicolas, and very pretty."

She went out, content with me.

One evening when I perceived from a window that Madame Paragon had returned alone, that is to say escorted by some women friends of hers who had departed immediately, the desire to speak to her made me run downstairs to meet her. My coming seemed to embarrass her, and I was going to retire.

"Please remain," she said to me. "Here is a new book. *The Letters of the Marquis de Roselles.* I wish you would read it to me."

I sat down beside a table. The book interested me keenly. I was reading rapidly, when I experienced a sensation novel, unhoped for, delicious! By chance the foot of Madame Paragon had placed itself on mine, which I held motionless for fear of letting her perceive it. I had this pleasure all during my reading, which did not end till eleven o'clock.

Nobody had returned yet. The day had been very hot. The evening was the most agreeable of the season and people were profiting by it.

Madame Paragon, on rising, felt that she was resting her weight on me. In the fear of hurting me she lost her balance and fell back against me. Electrified by this unexpected contact, I could not restrain an audacious movement. I pressed her delicate waist with both my hands, saying to her in an unsteady voice, "Oh, madame, have you not hurt yourself in falling?"

She blushed and drew away very quickly without answering me.

I observed the tone which she took with me thereafter. Her voice was softer, more harmonious, almost tremulous.

But the husband came in. His presence was odious to me, unbearable. I fled, the moment he made himself heard.

The next night I ran to my post at the window to see Madame Paragon return. She came home with the second volume of *The Letters of the Marquis de Roselles.* I read it to her.

Colette was facing me. She leaned back in her armchair with her legs crossed. She was listening attentively. I was reading with fervor. She closed her eyes. I sought for a light contact and succeeded in establishing it. I burned. I was consumed. I made a movement to draw closer. I was no longer master of myself. My voice failed me, my pronunciation became indistinct.

"You are fatigued," said Colette to me, opening her eyes. "You read with too much fervor. Stop there."

I closed the brochure, but did not draw away from her.

"This second part," she said, "pleases me more. The first part made me sad."

"And I, I was keenly interested in Leonore, but at present I am all for Mademoiselle de Ferval. Oh, what a difference! I see, all women attract, all can be loved, but . . . there are some who are goddesses . . . who must be adored."

I lowered my head. In truth, I was hunting for Madame Paragon's hand.

Someone entered the shop. I rose precipitately and ran to see who it was. I found Mademoiselle Manon Bourgoin, who, having

bolted the bottom part of the divided door, was leaning out of the top part saying goodby to someone who was kissing her hand. I let her alone and returned to announce her to Madame Paragon, who rose. I made so bold as to hold her back, saying:

"Madame, do not go! She is saying good-night to someone very tenderly, and— it would be an intrusion!"

Colette blushed, but remained. She did not say a word to me until Manon entered.

Festival day. Madame Paragon was dressed as I had never seen her before. She perceived my admiration at dinner. She went out as soon as they rose from the table. I saw her enter the house of her sister, Madame Minon, the wife of the notary, then go to vespers with her.

I remained indoors. I told all the help to take the afternoon off. They asked nothing better. Even Toinette had a visit to make to Mother Villetard, friend of her family, wife of the wine merchant.

It was freezing cold. I made a great fire in the parlor and began to read. The work which came to my hand was *Le Cid*, of Corneille. I read it not for the first time but with all my old enthusiasm. I was really in love with Chimene when I finished. I stirred the fire, savoring the lines. I was in a reverie when I heard the front door open. I was annoyed at being interrupted, until I saw, at the curtain, apparently hesitant to enter—Madame Paragon! I trembled. I brushed off a little

crimson armchair and pushed it forward for her.

"You have a good fire. Fortunately! for I am frozen through."

I saw that her feet were cold, but that she feared either to spoil her pretty shoes or to take them off in front of me. She was so beautiful, I was so transported, that I fell on my knees impulsively and took off her shoes without unbuckling them.

"At least, will you give me my house slippers?"

They were on the little table and I had only to reach out my hand. I presented them to her but she drew back. I rose.

"Please sit down."

I sat down. A profound silence.

"You were reading? I have disturbed you."

"I was just finishing *Le Cid*. Ah, how unhappy Chimene was! but how lovely!"

"Yes, she was in a cruel position."

"Oh, very cruel."

"I think, in truth, that those cruel positions . . . augment . . . . love?"

"Surely, madame. They augment it to a point . . ."

"Ah! how do you know, at your age?"

I was embarrassed. I blushed. A moment after, I took it upon myself to say, "I know as well as Rodrigue."

"That cannot be!"

"I assure you, madame."

"You have never had an . . . unhappy love."

"Madame means . . . a happy one."

"Happy or unhappy. You are a child."

"In reason. Not in heart."

"You speak as if I had wounded you. Poor boy! Do you think *Le Cid* is a good play?"

"Madame, if it is bad, I do not know it; I do not suspect it; I am as witless as the author."

This reply made Madame Paragon burst into laughter.

"Ah," she said, "if anybody heard you! As witless as Corneille, as a great genius!"

"I suspected that he was a genius, from the pleasure which his play has given me."

"Which did you like better, Chimene or Rodrigue?"

"Ah, Chimene! And you, madame?"

"Rodrigue."

I reflected a moment. A luminous idea presented itself.

"I know why."

"Why?"

"Well—"

I did not dare to say it. I let her coax me a long time. Finally I said:

"I love Chimene, madame, because she is of your sex. In truth, every time she speaks, I give her your air, your tone, your features, your adornment . . . your . . . beauty."

She blushed. I became very bold.

"Look, madame, you are the illustrations of the text, like those in the *Amorous Epistles* of Ovid."

"That is a pretty idea."

"I do not know if madame would like to tell me what she thinks of Rodrigue?"

"I . . . when I read . . . Rodrigue . . . I imagine him young . . . naive, having a tender

and pure heart . . . not without faults, but having only excusable ones."

"Ah, madame—" and I stopped.

"You were going to say something?"

"Yes, madame."

"I should like to know what it was."

"It was nothing, madame."

"Ah! that is a half-truth. Come!"

"Since I must tell you, for I see that you command, I meant, why do I not resemble Rodrigue?"

"But . . . there is . . . resemblance . . . I wish you the virtues of Rodrigue . . . and his final happiness. . . . My, how hot it is in here!"

"Shall I open the door, madame?"

"No, I am going out right away." Rising. "Listen to me, Monsieur Nicolas. One must have application as you have, one must be economical, hard working— Couldn't we find you a Chimene? Your parents are honest folk, esteemed; your father is the friend of mine—"

"Oh, madame, my father respects your father infinitely."

"And my father loves your father well."

She made several turns of the room, then sent me to her room to look for her new pink pelisse, doubtless so that she could put on her shoes in my absence. She gave me the blue one to take away, and when I came down again she was going out. What grace! I was admiring her in rapture, when I saw her come back.

"I was forgetting something."

She went upstairs hastily, leaving me her

muff. As she came down again very lightly she found me in adoration before the muff. She feigned to see nothing, and standing in front of the fire a moment she said: "If anyone inquires for me, I am at Manon Bourgoin's. Think a little of a Chimene whom I have mentioned to you."

She smiled as she went out.

"Oh, lady adored!" I exclaimed, when she was not yet two feet away.

I know she heard, for she slowed her pace. But at once she redoubled it. I was in ecstasy.

Sunday morning, the twentieth of January, I had been greatly moved by the sight of Madelon, whom I had never before seen in such provocative attire. Passing in front of me while I was standing at the divided door, she called to me: "You are not going to high mass, you heathen?"

She went away rapidly without awaiting my reply. Her shape, her grace, her voluptuous walk, in which there was a trace of embarrassment, aroused in me a furious tempest of desires. I thought, "How lovely she is! What happiness to be the unique and cherished possessor of a girl so beautiful!"

I forgot, as I so often did, all the projects I had had before. The present object alone occupied me as if I had been a veritable animal. I ran to labor at some verses for her, with an exaltation such as I had rarely felt. I did not come out of my enthusiasm until the call to dinner.

After dinner everybody went out, and I found

myself absolutely alone, toward two o'clock. I remembered that the festival of girls was the next day and that Madelon was to be the queen of it. I decided to make my verses fit the occasion. I sought such a meter as would go well with an air which she loved. I thought there was none more agreeable than that of her song, so flattering in its personal application, of the preceding autumn: "The heart I seek is frank and free."

Then I had the inspiration to make a sort of response to the same air in an acrostic with an intermediate verse, of which *Agnes* should be the key word.

I sat down in front of Madame Paragon's little library. My head went up in the clouds and I rhymed.

The last word was not yet written, when I heard the front door open. It was about three o'clock. The vespers of the parish where Madelon had prayed to her saint had just ended, and people were going to the services of the Cordeliers.

I thought it was Toinette coming back, so I did not bother, but went on writing.

Someone was behind my chair as I was reading my verses over, singsong to be sure that nothing was lacking in the meter. I turned around. It was Madelon, more beautiful than she had been in the morning. I gave a cry of joyful surprise.

"And you have not been to vespers?"

"Seeing you there, so beautiful, I should have been too greatly moved. I have been thinking of you all this time."

"What is that you are reading over to yourself?"

"Look!"

I handed her my verses, with this title: *To Mademoiselle MADELON BARON: ACROSTIC, for the day of the festival of girls, to the air of, etc.*

Madelon blushed as she read. When she had finished she returned the paper to me.

"But don't you see that it is addressed to you?"

"Oh, I did not think."

She folded it up and squeezed it. I took her hands. I embraced her. She defended herself feebly.

"I adore you!" I said to her, after ravishing a kiss from her lips.

"I don't believe a word you say!"

"I adore you!" I repeated after two new kisses.

"No I do not believe you!"

"I adore you! I love you more than my life . . . I shall prove it in a very few days."

"No!" with a charming air, "I do not believe you!"

At each protestation of incredulity I took a kiss from her lips. Finally I pressed her in my arms. Then quitting her, at the instant when her eyes were covered with a cloud of voluptuousness, I ran to bar the door. In the wink of an eye I rejoined her, and pressed her vigorously in my arms.

"I adore you!" I repeated.

"No, no, you fickle man, you do not love me!"

With what adorable languor she expressed herself! Her lips hardly avoided mine, now. Madelon had never been so beautiful. Her repeated sighs swelled her breast. A profound sigh escaped from my breast. The lips of Madelon pressed mine. We did not speak. The desires excited by the charms, by the caresses had reached a climax. If I had seemed a few minutes in the immobility of ecstasy, it was because my happiness was great enough. I wanted nothing. But this state cannot prolong itself. Happiness is like lightning; when one desire is satisfied another succeeds it, to flash only an instant.

Pressed with a tender vehemence against my breast, she said to me in a dying voice, "Leave me . . . if you are . . . a seducer."

"Your lover swears to you an eternal love!" I cried, beside myself. "Crown my vows, adored girl, and fear nothing. In triumphing I become your slave forever!"

Madelon sighed. She returned my kiss. How happy I was!

The vespers of the Cordeliers lasted only three-quarters of an hour. The great clock sounds twelve little strokes before the hour; Madelon fled as soon as she heard the warning.

She left me more in love with her than ever. It is to this happy natural disposition, which renders me more tender in enjoyment than in desire, that I have sometimes owed the possession of a heart—but what have I gained by it? The loss of my fortune.

After the departure of Madelon I sat down

to reflect on my happiness. No remorse, I felt none.

"She is single," I thought, "and so am I. I will marry her. My parents will think it an advantageous match and seemly in all respects. She is charming. They will adore her. She loves me, and I shall be the happiest of men."

Then returning sadly to my obsession, "Ah, if she could efface from my heart a fatal passion!"

I congratulated myself on being engaged—for I was then sufficiently chaste to believe that the favors of Madelon had made her my wife.

My excitement was over. Walking along absorbed I was occupying myself deliciously with the last undulations of pleasure, when I heard the Angelus sound. The bell reminded me that Madelon was going to make her maiden ministrations there for the last time.

I ran to the house to relieve Toinette. I let her go out, then quickly I locked up and went to see Madelon keep the vigil.

It was not a fancy. She was exalted above herself. I never saw anything to equal her beauty of that evening. Her complexion was the most beautiful of roses, her eyes were star-bright with happiness. She came up to me. We were alone, happily, in the Chapel of the Virgin. I kissed one of her hands, doubtless lowered purposely at my side. She said to me, "Ah, that I should love you here! Ask Her forgiveness."

"Oh, no! I thank Her."

What a charming smile this reply won me!

After the benediction I attended Madelon to her door. She said, almost without stopping, "Delicate, modest, intelligent, sensitive, doing everything just in the right way and at the right time: such is my lover."

She went in. I had only time to call to her, as she closed the door, "And your husband."

Coming back in, I busied myself with the translation until seven o'clock.

Work or study was a necessity for me. In the evening I could not endure myself when I had "lost the day," as Titus said. I wanted to see, at the end of each day, a little progress, a little advancement. On this depended my self-respect.

How is it that with these natural dispositions I have not amounted to more?

At seven o'clock, content, because I had made some forward steps in my education and in my profession, I went out for an instant. I walked as far as the door of Mademoiselle Blonde, then retraced my steps as if impelled by an external power. I perceived Madelon leaning on the divided door. She had doubtless heard me come out. I ran to her, seized her hand and kissed it with rapture.

"Ah, Monsieur Nicolas! what have we done?"

"Adorable, we have found our happiness. I will confess I was unsettled, but now I know who is true to me I am steadfast, and I shall be so forever!"

"Forever," she said, "I am yours."

"Let us swear it," I returned placing her hand on my heart.

"I swear it to you."

"And I—I swear that you shall have my faith, my constancy, my absolute fidelity. I am your adorer. She who has given me my happiness is my divinity."

"Go," she said, "and feel how much I owe you. You keep me from repenting. Oh, my lovely lover! I judged you the very first time I saw you, and I said to myself, 'I will make his happiness by love or he will not wish it!' You have always had my esteem. All my heart, all myself is yours. . . . But my maid is calling me. Adieu!"

As I left her I was even more happy than when I had possessed her.

[Madelon died suddenly, a few days later. This event brought Restif and Madame Paragon closer together. After a long visit from the mother and sisters of Monsieur C—, the following ensues—]

Monsieur C— had left for Vermenton. I did not know it. Gaudet d'Arras came to see me and said to me, laughing, "He leaves a beautiful widow!"

I made no reply to this witticism. I was thinking, "Ah, if this charming woman really had lost her husband—"

That evening at supper I found myself alone with Madame Paragon, the foreman having been detained at his uncle's with Gaudet d'Arras, and probably by the latter. Barbet had gone away with Monsieur. A servant had been sent to invite the "beautiful widow" to supper, but Gaudet d'Arras, all powerful in the

house, had intercepted him. I did not know anything about that at the time.

We talked after supper, Colette and I. It had been almost three months since we had had a private conversation. Colette said to me:

"Quite a solitude after having such a house full."

I bowed. Toinette cleared the table and we sat down in front of the fire.

"My mother-in-law and my sisters-in-law," Colette went on, "do not like you. I tell you this so that you will not be hurt if Monsieur is somewhat unkind to you. His mother and sisters have been warning him against you."

"Have I offended them? It was quite unintentional."

"Yes, you have offended them. But do not be surprised.

"They spoke a great deal of your cleverness, of your sharpness. Fortunately I know you, or they would have frightened me. If you have some merit, if you have some intelligence, it is not cleverness, even less is it sharpness; I believe you to have the opposite faults. But, in a word, they consider you shrewd, cunning, adroit, and dangerous."

I bit my lip to keep from blurting out the thought which came to me: Ah, if I could carry away from them her who is their glory, and who is so far above them by her beauty and merit, I should be quite indifferent to their trust or distrust, their esteem or their contempt.

"You are pensive," said Colette.

"Yes, I am sorry to have displeased these ladies. But what can be done about it?"

"Nothing. They are gone, without getting the satisfaction they hoped for, of surprising a conversation or some marks of interest—of catching me in something which is not in my character. Try only to conciliate Monsieur a bit. Monsieur d'Arras can serve us in that, and he is a man whom we must cultivate in spite of his dangerous principles."

"I hope to succeed in doing so, madame. But you must remember that it is impossible for me to refrain from showing you the respect and the zeal which are in my heart."

"And again—you must refrain!" she said, blushing a little, and I saw that she had not told me all she knew.

"Oh, madame! Come what may of it, but it is impossible."

"I mean that you . . . must avoid showing so much fire when . . . praising me . . . and when . . . executing my orders. Let Bardet, Tourangeot, Toinette, do the things I have told them to do, at least. Don't rush around and bump into everybody in your haste to go where I do not send you. One day you knocked my sisters-in-law and their mother into a heap and ran right over them!"

"I did not notice it, madame."

"I know you didn't!"

"I will impose on myself this . . . grievous ... restriction, madame. Since you order it, it is doubtless necessary?"

"Yes, it is necessary. That is not all. I have some advice to give you. But . . . it costs me.

I . . . should not like . . . because of my pronounced and sincere views . . . for you to find another Madelon, but I want you to have . . . an honorable amusement, feigned rather than real, which will throw Monsieur off the track on the subject of . . . my sister Fanchette. When it becomes a question of marriage I shall know what to do. I count, at present, on this, that I have the word of my father, and that . . . Emilie is married. . . . One is not likely to have any fresh heartaches after one has lost . . . forever . . . Emilie and Madelon—"

"Emilie Laloge? Eh, madame, how—"

"I know that."

"I have never adored anybody but—"

"I know it," she interrupted quickly. "So the object of your passion would think twice about marrying you. 'Never has passion,' says my father, 'made a marriage happy!' You would have been happy with Madelon, who was your confidante and your true friend. You would be happy with my sister because your passion has another object, and your feeling for her is of a nature never to burn out. And, if I must tell you, this reason has determined my father to give his consent, for I have told him all about it."

"Madame," I answered, profoundly astonished, "dispose of me. I swear to yield to you the same direction over my fate as I yield to God. I will follow your intentions, as much as shall be in my power; but whatever happens, be assured that a word will recall me to your orders as a devoted adorer."

"Adorer? No."

"I am neither base nor groveling. I am proud with men, but I glory in being the adorer of a woman whom I . . . honor." It was another word I meant.

Toinette entered. Madame Paragon had her sit down beside her and continued to speak to me.

"I know your sentiments. They are honest and cannot offend me. But Toinette knows all that has been said?"

"Oh Lord, yes, I know, and I do not understand how ladies of their age and intelligence can have such ideas, to go so far as to say to Monsieur one day, 'La! la! that Monsieur Nicolas is madly in love with Madame.' Only, of course there is no sense in that."

I blushed, thinking, "They lack neither penetration nor intelligence, but I did not know I had been so imprudent."

"So Monsieur told them," continued Toinette, "'I have too many good proofs of the contrary to believe any such thing. Unless he is madly in love with three or four at a time, for I know him to have three mistresses, without counting the casual—'"

Here Madame Paragon put her hand over the mouth of the innocent Toinette, who repeated these expressions without knowing the force of them.

"Yes, madame, they said that, and Monsieur answered what I told you. One's mind must be upside down. . . . And then, don't we know how he was with Mademoiselle Madelon when she was alive? Oh, if I were not a girl, and I

dared speak to Monsieur, I know what I would say to him."

"You know, madame," I then said, "what are my views and my hopes. So, I entrust myself to your justice."

"As for me, monsieur," replied Colette, "be sure that I know what is to be done. But let us read something."

She gave me Racine. I read *Phedre*, which made a prodigious impression on the naive Toinette. One reflection, drawn from the depth of the young girl's innocence, frightened Madame Paragon: "A woman . . . can love . . . somebody besides her husband?"

The admiration of Toinette for me, from whom she thought she derived all the pleasure which Racine's lines gave her, has made me understand since how much one could love tragedy actors and actresses if their morals were more worthy their profession and if they would ever cease to be mountebanks. Toinette was so moved that when I was taking my leave she kissed my hand, saying, "Oh my master, shall I read like you one day?"

I went upstairs, absorbed in my reflections. I had thought I saw kindness in the eyes of Madame Paragon. I was inflamed by her charms, and perhaps, had it not been for the presence of Toinette, I should have declared myself.

I stopped at the door of my cabinet. I thought of what I could do in the absence of Monsieur C—— . . . of my conversation with Colette . . . . of the reading of *Phedre*, of what Toinette had said . . . of the pictures which

Gaudet d'Arras had just painted for me . . . . of the witticism, "A beautiful widow."

"We *shall* be happy!" I exclaimed. "She is too beautiful. Surely I shall have no remorse. She does not want me to have another Madelon, but 'an honest amusement.' I cannot doubt that she . . . Who else could? She does not want a new Madelon . . . Ah yes, her kindness . . . . Like Madelon she wants to preserve me from solitary errors and from libertinism. Well then! She awaits me . . . Let us spare her modesty. Not a movement which might wound her. Let us possess with respect this sacred object. Let us feign to believe that she has not awakened."

These were the reflections which determined me in the most audacious of enterprises.

I descended, drunken with love and hope. I had no very clear ideas of what was going to happen. I crossed the court. Arriving at her door, which opened outward, I turned the knob so slowly that it made no noise. I entered. I closed the door again with as much caution. Guided by the feeble light of a lamp, I went to kneel beside Colette's bed. I sought to touch her. I was in a terrible situation! She woke. She stretched out her hand, exclaiming, "Who is it?"

Then, on reflection, "Toinette? Toinette?"

I lay down flat, and the arm which she stretched toward me passed above me. If she had touched me, what would have happened? I tremble yet. She would have taken me for a robber. She would perhaps have had a dangerous fright. She would have cried out—at

least she would have rung. Tourangeot, the foreman, Toinette, Jean Lelong would have run up. I should have been seized. I was lost forever. Oh how my brothers would have triumphed! What grief for my parents! These ideas frightened me immediately afterward. But in the excitement of action I did not think of them then. Thus are the first crimes committed.

I waited until her respiration told me that she had gone back to sleep. I thought of stealing a kiss. I could not succeed in doing so. I should have wakened her.

A bit of calm brought back a glimmer of reason. I must withdraw.

I reopened the door and closed it slowly, without making any noise. Yet it was apparent that Colette heard me, for she gave me sufficient time to get upstairs before ringing for Toinette, who slept in the kitchen just across the court from the chamber. This angel, this adorable woman said nothing to Toinette but had her sleep with her the rest of the night.

I went back to bed. How many frightful ideas presented themselves then! I felt all the magnitude of the peril I had just run, though I thought little of the magnitude of my crime.

To what are we not conducted by sentiments fostered with too much complaisance? Excited by the verses which I composed daily to calm myself—doubly aroused by all the efforts I made to overcome my passion—ah, what was I to do?

Next day Colette did not say a word of what had happened in the night. If she suspected

me, she had too much modesty to let her suspicion appear. She made no confidence to Toinette, to Bourgoin, nor even to Manon, her friend. But that night she asked the last named, in my presence, to come and sleep with her all during the absence of Monsieur C——. It was another kindness to choose Manon Bourgoin; in case of a new imprudence on my part she was a double friend, incapable of tattling to any other than Gaudet d'Arras, my councilor.

Such was the inception and the issue of my first criminal attempt, more terrible in its sequels that it appeared in itself. It persuaded me that Colette had recognized me and that she was not unkind.

II. ZEPHIRE

One Sunday I had gone with three friends to take the air in the Bois de Boulogne. The absence of the adored sex made me feel as feeble as the mythical giant felt when he no longer touched the earth. I could not go on. As they went to take refreshment I quitted them furtively and returned to Paris, meaning to attend the opera.

I entered by the first gate of the Louvre, that which opens into the rue Fromanteau. In this street, between that of Beauvais and that of Jean-Saint-Denis, I had seen some girls whose looks I had liked.

They were not there.

I was going on toward the opera again, when, raising my eyes, I perceived a charming little face in a third story window on the other side of the rue Saint-Honoré. I kept my eyes fixed on her and studiously ignored the familiarities of the window-tappers on each side of this infamous street.

The young person, who was plucking a harp, had noticed me. My eyes spoke to her. She was a child. With a charming smile and gesture she beckoned me to come up. I darted into the entrance of her house, curious to see a public woman who cultivated an agreeable talent. She came, herself, to let me in.

I was surprised to find a nymph, apparently

about thirteen or fourteen years old. She was one of the Graces. She had a delicious smile, a lively and gentle manner, voice melodious and enchanting, figure very slender but already blooming. Indeed she had everything, cleanness, taste, and even modesty which one would suppose was forever banished from these abominable places.

She said to me, "Mamma is not here." She embraced me, and said sweet things to me.

I was surprised, enchanted! I had no desires. I felt only tenderness. Indeed I felt for this young unfortunate, with her scarcely formed charms, the same respect which I should have had for Fanchette Collet in the presence of her sister. (I was cured of that grief but still subject to relapse.) I restricted myself to the most fervent caresses. The lovely girl returned them to me in the sweetest manner. She had not sung to me, though I had requested her to do so; it would have been a diversion. I asked her how old she was. She smiled.

"Guess."

"Fifteen or sixteen?"

"Seventeen," she replied.

"I should not have believed it," I returned, "but you are so soon used up, in your profession, that at fifteen you appear to be twenty."

One who was returning heard us.

"You know all about it!" she said to me sourly, thinking "twenty" was my estimate of the young person's age. "The little girl is eleven, going on twelve."

"I was joking," the child returned. "I do not want to lie. She is right, almost."

The other looked out the window.

"Here is Madame!" she said to us.

At these words, seeing that the child was embarrassed, I came away. I felt no remorse this time, as I usually did on leaving a prostitute. I was tranquil, content with myself. A ray of my former virtue was shining in the muddy abyss of my heart. I found that I was honest again, and I was astonished.

Such was my first meeting with Zephire.

The next day I went to work enthusiastically as if I already knew what Zephire was to be to me. Every moment I said to myself. "What a pity! So young! I could adore her—"

All week I thought of nothing else.

Sunday morning I palpitated with joy. I could see Zephire. Loiseau came to propose a party.

"No," I said quickly. "I have a better one."

I took the occasion to tell him about Zephire. He smiled pityingly. Then he made me friendly remonstrances. My confession gave Loiseau the idea that he ought to follow me and see what sort of girl I preferred to my loyal friends.

At three o'clock I went back to see Zephire. She received me with rapture. The attraction had been reciprocal; perhaps she felt it the more strongly.

"Ah!" she said to me, "I have spoken to mamma in just the right way. My sister Manon has a *friend*, and so have all our young ladies. I am the only one that did not have

anybody, and I bring in the most money, even if I am a virgin. I told mamma that I wanted to have a friend who was an honest boy, and not a sharper nor a spy like the others. I said I had the hardest work and received all the old men, so I ought to be paid back by having someone young and honest. I told her I had just made the acquaintance of a very sweet boy, not a drunkard, not a gambler, not a libertine, not a blackmailer, not a spy, very attractive, and that I wanted him, to love him with all my heart! Mamma answered that a spy was better, because he could keep us warned of plots to make trouble for us; then keeping a spy was a way of standing in with the police, who give us to certain spies as a reward for their services, instead of paying them. While if I took an honest man, he could never warn us of raids, nor even come to our parties, and I'd have to do without him, then. She repeated that the police liked for us to have spies, because the money the spies got from us was salary enough for them, and that we were licensed for this reason and not for our usefulness to the public. But I stuck to it and finally brought her around. She is coming now."

Zephire rang. I was quite unprepared for this curious proposal. The "mamma" arrived. She was really Zephire's mother. I had on a great hat which I did not take off.

"This is my friend," said the child, "Dulis" —I had taken this name before with the actresses and with Monet—"Dulis, this is my mother. Will you salute her?"

I rose without speaking and bowed so low

that she did not see my face. My honest air, my costume, even my silence, confirmed what Zephire had said of me. But I was ashamed. I did not dare face the monster who prostituted the childhood of her daughter, and I can say that I did not see her.

"Well," said the vile woman to me, "since she wants you, she can have you. All that I ask of you is that you do not make her waste her time and do not take her to the cabaret. Otherwise, you will do what you like, and I leave her free to act according to her fancy. But remember this, that not being one of *those* messieurs"—the spies, the sharpers, the ordinary partners of women a bit above those abandoned to the National Guardsmen—"you have no right to make her *sing in spite of herself*, and if you try it I will come and straighten things out! I leave you together. What is your name? She said Dulis, I believe? For I must give your name to Monsieur Maret, our inspector, so that he will not put Zephire down for one of his men."

After the assurance I gave her by signs that I would act well with her daughter, she went out. The trull thought she understood me, but I promised myself to do a hundred times better than she expected. My air had pleased her. She was charmed that her daughter, still so young, had an honest young man, timid, who would not give her a taste for strong liquors.

When we were alone, Zephire pressed me to her heart. I found happiness again at last, but I was astounded at the place it had chosen to

await me. I forgot the world in the arms of Zephire. I forgot her profession—but it was cruelly recalled to me in the evening!

At sunset there was a ring for her. It was the hour at which all the friends must retire. Zephire told me this, and it was like a dagger thrust in my heart. Going out with some haste, I perceived an old man, or rather a skeleton, who was to succeed me. I was so disagreeably affected that I resolved never again to see the lovely child who had given me such sweet moments.

I went away pensive. I sought to debase myself, to place myself on the level of the prostituted Zephire, then I felt that it was not the consciousness of my dignity which constrained me, but a mechanical jealousy, an obscure desire that my mistress should be for me only, though I could not withdraw her from her unhappy profession. In other words, a wish for the impossible.

Next Sunday I went out with the resolution not to see Zephire. I walked along, sure of my will power, and nevertheless my feet conducted me to her stair. They carried me up, against my reasoned determination. I found myself at her door in spite of myself. My hands betrayed me as my feet had done. I knocked. I was furious with myself. And yet I entered. Our interview would have been more delicious than the previous one if I could have thought that it would not be interrupted. But at every moment I imagined the tinkle of the infamous little bell. Nevertheless, enchanted by her caresses, I was beginning to

lose myself in illusion when the detestable little bell recalled my beloved to infamy. I saw the same old man. I went out, soul sick. A new customer would perhaps have afflicted me less. I passed the next week in constant anguish.

Saturday, just when we were being paid off, there came to Claude Herissant an urgent memorial to be printed for a lawyer. Claude did not ordinarily handle this kind of work, but the lawyer was a friend of his.

When the lawyer appeared his memorial was being sewed. I was still alone in the print shop, the workers not arriving till late on Monday.

"I wish to see the compositors," said the lawyer, "and give them a testimonial of my satisfaction."

Claude conducted him to me.

"Here they are," he said.

"I see only one man."

"He is the only one. He has done your whole job, and he has worked straight through since Saturday evening."

At the same time Claude handed me ten ecus and added twelve francs, nine for three sheets at three livres, and three livres for my night. The lawyer gave six francs which he had promised. I thus had forty-eight livres for thirty-six hours of work, and a lot of compliments.

That was not all. Claude took a great liking to me. I became his trusted friend. He told me the most intimate secrets of his home. He

did not know to whom he was speaking! Not a day passed but he came to talk with me and make me these confidences.

He had two charming neighbors, who occupied the second story of the house next door, the one with the little balconies. I had been watching the younger of the two sisters. I had sometimes spoken of her to Claude with praise. That was enough. He wished to oblige me by permitting me to meet them.

He invited them and their mamma to come and see the print shop. Claude and his wife escorted them. They arrived at the moment when two pretty grisettes, Mesdemoiselles Edmee and Reine Giraud, daughters of a press worker of the house, had just entered the big workroom with Mademoiselle Manon Lavergne, our neighbor, cousin of our foreman and of Bonne-Sellier. Claude took the ladies through all the compartments and finally brought them to mine. I occupied a little cabinet hidden by a curtain of paper.

"Do you want to see my solitary?" he asked the two belles.

He raised the curtain. I saluted them in a manner which distinguished me a bit from the automatons they had just visited. I spoke to the youngest and offered to print her name on her arm without hurting her. She raised a great many difficulties, to which I replied that I had just printed Lavergne's and her friends' names on their arms. She finally consented. I set the name, *Julie Du Rumin*, which was dictated to me by the mother, while Madame Heríssant talked dresses to little Lavergne; and I added, *whom I adore*. This was an im-

prudence, but I hoped that it would be regarded as a badinage.

I printed the name on the satin of the most beautiful of arms. I pressed very lightly the *whom I adore;* it was just barely visible. The ladies read only the name. I printed that of the elder sister, *Sophie Du Rumin*, but I had removed the fatal phrase; then that of the mother. The three names printed, I was overwhelmed at having touched the arm of the daily admired beauty, whom I had never hoped to see so near.

My joy was of brief duration. Claude, among other faults, had that of religious hypocrisy, and of the greatest severity toward his wife, very lovely then.

The ladies showed their names to Madame Herissant, who wanted to read them. Claude said that it was he who had printed them. Of course that was not entirely a lie: the master *does* all that his workmen do for him. Madame Herissant read first the arm of the mother, then that of the elder sister; finally the beautiful younger sister presented hers: *Julie Du Rumin whom I adore.*

"Whom you adore, monsieur!" said Madame Herissant to her husband.

As there was something in it, Claude turned red, white, blue, violet, with rage and humiliation. He took it all out on me. He gave me a terrible look! and from that moment he ceased to speak to me. He ordered the foreman, Lavergne, to give me dirty work, but as I did not know this I suffered a long time. Finally I discovered that I was the object of his hatred and left the house to go to work in that of André Knapen.

To return to the Sunday of the memorial, when I did not go out.

I had not been able to make my half unwilling visit to Zephire. Monday the usual routine began and filled my whole week. But Sunday I could not resist the desire to see Zephire again. Loiseau, who had resolved to accompany me to her place the preceding Sunday, or to follow me, to find out what became of me, and who had waited vainly for me with Mademoiselle Zoe Delaport, proposed to go with me. I consented, and took him to Zephire's.

His presence hardly constrained the tender reproaches which she made me, but he took me aside to make me friendly observations on the unseemliness of love in such a place. Nevertheless he remained all during the session between Zephire and me.

In the evening, at the cursed hour, there was a ring for Zephire. I saw him again, that abhorred old man! Loiseau saw him as I did, and we went out.

We walked in silence. I was overwhelmed. Finally, close to our dwelling, I burst out with these words, "No, I will never see her again!"

"Oh, my friend," said Loiseau, "I was waiting for that. What a role we have just played. What a sight for those we love: you and I coming out of that house!"

I listened to him in a sort of annihilation. We entered our room and throwing myself on a chair, my face hidden in my two hands, I cried out, "Oh Rose, if you saw my humiliation! How you would triumph! Proud wench, how you would congratulate yourself on your ridiculous airs! I am the lover of a lost woman. Oh Colette, whom I have so dolorously regretted, with what justice your sister was taken from me! What am I at this moment, and who could have foreseen my fall?"

I silenced myself, but my shame and grief

were such that I was glad of the death of Madame Paragon! The blasphemy is written, and I shall not erase it. Loiseau tried to console me. He did not succeed at that moment, but my confidence in him was fortified.

I saw him every day. He went to André Knapen's with me and we worked together. We were inseparable.

I left the house of Bonne-Sellier and lodged alone at the top of a house in the little rue Sainte-Anne-du-Palais. My landlord was a fruit-seller-billsticker—and, oh yes, he added the calling of porter to his other pursuits. I was a little worse off than in the rue Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre, since my chamber was only a garret papered with playbills pasted over the laths, but I was humbled and less hard to please.

Oh Colette, if you had seen your friend in this dreary lair, on a bad bed, having for furniture only two chairs and a table, all shattered, an old trunk without a lock to put my clothes in, an airhole with two squares of oiled paper serving for a window!

Loiseau became my guardian angel. He purified my morals—but it was Zephire who had given me back the sentiment of virtue. I ceased to see Gaudet, for I would rather have died than have taken him to Zephire's. I no longer saw this young girl herself. I thought she had forgotten me at the end of some time, or rather I did not think I had ever interested her.

In my new situation I became melancholy. My old sorrows, concentrated in my heart, belabored me internally and destroyed my health. I fell dangerously ill. Loiseau did not abandon me. He cared for me, and his faithful mistress Mademoiselle Zoe watched over me while he

was away toiling for both of us. He sold half his clothes. He borrowed from Mademoiselle Zoe who nearly starved herself for us. But these two tender friends had imperious duties, and in spite of their ardent zeal I remained three quarters of the time alone and without succor.

There came upon me a periodic suffocation which lasted twenty-four hours. I am told that it was caused by the mercurial frictions with which young Labadie plied me unnecessarily, and by the pills, equally unnecessary, which my friend the apothecary Bonnet thrust down me. The suffocation grew for eight hours, for eight hours it was at its height, and during the last eight hours it decreased gradually. I was afterward in such a feebleness that I should have fallen if breathed on.

Loiseau was desolated at this singular attack which obliged either him or Mademoiselle Zoe to watch over me as long as it lasted. We had no more funds, and almost no more clothes. He was forced to abandon me to go and earn our living; I pressed him, myself, to do this rather than borrow a louis or two from some compatriots of his, newly arrived in Paris and lodging in the rue Sainte-Anne, butte Saint-Roch. However, he went to them, intending, on the way, to ask Bonnet to come see me and procure me some relief.

At the corner of the rue des Bons-Enfants, Zephire saw him and recognized him. She descended precipitately, in spite of the disorder of her morning dress, and joined him opposite the Palais Royal.

"Monsieur," she said timidly, "do you know if Monsieur Dulis is in Paris?"

"Yes, mademoiselle, he is here."

"Ah, can he remain so long without seeing me?"

"And what would you want with him in his present state?"

"Present state! Is he ill?"

"Yes, he has been for a long time. But I am in a hurry. He is alone. Adieu, mademoiselle."

"Oh! Where does he live?"

"He is not—in a position—to see you."

"I beg you! Where does he live?"

"Rue Saint-Anne."

"It isn't far? It is toward the rue Richelieu?"

"No, that is not the one. Adieu, mademoiselle."

And he fled, blushing to have been seen so long in conversation with a girl of her profession who was hardly out of childhood.

Zephire did not know my rue Sainte-Anne, but she had heard that sometimes in Paris there were two or three streets of the same name. She went back to her place, clad herself decently though showily, asked Manon the way to the two rues Sainte-Anne, and, having guessed mine, she took all the money and jewels she could lay her hands on, profited by the absence of her mother and escaped alone. She arrived at the court of Lamoignon, traversed the halls of the Palais-de-Justice, inquiring at every step, and came to my street.

She named me. No one knew me.

"Look in the furnished rooming houses," somebody told her.

Zephire asked for me in two or three places, and finally arrived at the badly furnished lair of my host the fruitseller-billsticker-porter. She asked for Monsieur Dulis.

"I have no Monsieur Dulis. Who is he?"

"He is my cousin. He is sick."

"Ah, I have a sick man upstairs."
"That is the one!"
"Well, go up to the fifth."
"Is he well cared for?"
"No."
"What does he lack?"
"Broth."
"Here is six francs. Get him a capon, four pounds of beef, and some vegetables for a pot-au-feu, and meanwhile if you have any—"
"Yes. Yes."

She mounted quickly. Arriving at my door she found the key there. She looked in and on a crippled chair recognized the only garment remaining to me. Assured then, she entered. I did not turn my head, for the least movements caused me pain. Moreover the last eight hours of my crisis had just begun, and my exhaustion was extreme. Zephire approached on the tips of her toes. She saw me filthy, sweating, ill arranged.

"Ah God!" she said half-aloud, "what a state he is in!"

She drew a perfumed white handkerchief and dried my face. I looked at her and not recognizing her but knowing it was not Zoe, whom an indisposition had detained in her home for some days, I said feebly, "Who is it?" without moving.

A voice sweet as harmony: "It is your Zephire. What! you are ill and your wife does not know it? Ah, you do not know, then, that she is all yours. No, you do not know how she loves you. Avoid everybody, if you wish, but not Zephire. She is such a true comrade. She will love you until death."

I kissed her beautiful hands which were putting bonbons impregnated with English drops

into my mouth, and changing my nightcap, and cleaning me up. How sweet is woman's care! Zephire did not rest until everything was tidy around me. Clad in lace-frilled pink taffeta as she was, she even went so far as to sweep my garret.

"You do not know?" she said to me at last.

"What is it, my charming friend?" for I had just recovered all my tenderness for her, and in double measure, perhaps.

"You are going to be a father."

"How a father?"

"Yes. Judge how I must love you! You—" She hid herself in my breast. "And you had abandoned me!"

I was greatly surprised, but I was charmed.

The host entered, bringing me a broth. I took it from the hands of Zephire. She rendered me all the other services necessary to a sick man. Then she said to me, "Oh, my dear! I must leave you, but I will return in a few hours. I will come back every day."

She went behind an old carpet which I had hung up to form a sort of alcove. She remained there several minutes as if arranging my table, came back to kiss me several times, and went out.

Watching her go, I thought—for I was too weak to speak these words: "Who could have foreseen it! This child is attached to me, in spite of her way of living. Her profession has not taken away the sympathetic soul which nature gave her. Oh poor child, to what a state you have been condemned! and how unhappy I am to be so poor that I am forced to let you continue in it!"

My host came to interrupt these thoughts, bringing me another broth as Zephire had or-

dered. He informed me that "my cousin" had given him six francs, that I was soon to have two good pots-au-feu, that he had been paid for them, that he would take nothing for the cooking, because of the beef I should leave for him and his children while I should be eating the capon. I was keenly touched by this mark of Zephire's friendship, and by her decency in passing for my relative.

"Mamselle your cousin is a femme-de-chambre somewhere?" continued my host. "One can see that she loves you well. Ho! she sure does. She went away crying like everything."

The most flowery discourse could not have caused me as much pleasure as did this crude language. The fruitseller-billsticker-porter went out as soon as I had taken the broth.

Loiseau arrived an instant later.

"Dear friend," he said to me, "here are some English drops and sugar which Bonnet has given me. He is a good fellow; he will come to see you as soon as he can get out. I was at the apartment of my compatriots for what you know. They left this morning."

"My friend," I answered, "I can get along without them. I am better. I have just taken two broths and am feeling better already."

While I was speaking, Loiseau had gone to my little table to cut some bread for his dinner. He was asking me if Zoe had come, when he perceived a big sack. He touched it. A silvery sound made itself heard. Moved, he said to me:

"You did not tell me about that."

"About what, my friend?"

He pointed to the sack.

"About what?" I repeated.

"The money!"

And he spilled out on the table twelve hundred livres in great ecus which the sack had contained.

"Then you had money, my friend? We did not completely understand each other? Here is a big sack crammed with six-franc ecus, and I want to know where they came from!"

"You have brought them!"

I sat up.

"Eh! I found the sack on the table," exclaimed Loiseau.

"On my table?"

I pulled the carpet aside and looked. I saw a mound of gold.

"Oh! what is the sum?"

Loiseau counted, ten to a pile.

"You did not know—"

"No, my friend. Oh, God! could it be—"

"Then someone has been here?"

"Yes, that young girl I took you to see, one day."

"Zephire!"

"It is true. She has seen me she has spoken to me."

"A prostitute!"

"Say no more, my friend. Do you not fear to blaspheme? We must respect her."

"Do I respect her! Ah, no matter where virtue may be, I prostrate myself and adore it."

Tears streamed down over his breast. He counted the money again. "Twelve hundred livres! Enough to cure you."

He fastened the neck of the sack.

"But remember what this money has cost her who gave it to you."

"Yes, I am sensible of that, and I know how we must repay her."

Loiseau was drunk with joy, for he loved me

more than himself since he had served me so well: he valued me proportionately to the trouble which I cost him. Loiseau returned to work. I begged him to go see how Zoe was and to bring her to dine with us at the hour when the pot-au-feu should be ready.

Zephire reappeared before the return of my friend. She was no longer showily gowned but wore a modest street dress. Her sister Manon accompanied her.

"Ah!" she said to me, "I love mamma and sister with all my soul. They approve. They say that I owe you my care, and my mother permits me to stay and be your nurse."

I kissed their hands.

"She is your wife," said Manon. "If she were in the hospital wouldn't you be under obligation to relieve her? May you never have to return this favor! But there is so much trouble in life that people must be ready to help each other out. Zephire is yours. She owes you everything. She will make every sacrifice for you. You have only to speak to her. I know how she feels. If I had a friend who was a good fellow and behaved decently to me, I would do just as much for him. Mamma has seen how you acted with my sister and is mighty glad that she has you instead of somebody who would give her bad habits, for Zephire is goodnatured and will do anything for those she loves. We know how much she is attached to us, and how different she is from the other girls, who have no feelings at all."

"My dear," said Zephire to me, "now that I can stay with you and take care of you, you will see how I enjoy doing things for you."

The twenty-four hours of suffocation had just terminated and I was infinitely better. I smiled at my sweetheart's speech.

"I don't think you need to stay," she said to her sister.

Loiseau then made his appearance. He was surprised to see two pretty girls in my room. He recognized Zephire and kept silent, guessing what the other girl was.

Zephire made him a welcome worthy of him and herself, and Loiseau could not fail to see that she was the soul of honor and generosity. She repeated that she could do everything that was necessary here, and Loiseau having assured Manon that the crisis was past, the latter decided to leave us as soon as we had supped.

My host, to whom the two girls had given their orders, appeared with a cot bed for "my young cousin," who was to be my nurse. At the same time our supper was brought up. Loiseau braced the table and set it. Wine was brought.

"Oh if Zoe were here!" I exclaimed.

"Who is she?" Zephire asked.

"The friend of my friend," I replied.

"I shall love her," she returned.

Loiseau told us that Mademoiselle Delaporte had been very ill but was better this evening.

"She is terribly sorry that she could not be with you during your crisis," he added, "and she wants to come tomorrow."

Loiseau and Manon sat on the cot, Zephire and I on my bed. The sight of the food gave me a bit of appetite. I ate little, nevertheless, but I received every morsel from her hand, for the two of us had only one plate. It is

true that Manon and Loiseau were in the same plight. Joy returned to my heart; it sparkled in my sweetheart's eyes, and Loiseau partook of it.

"After our long, long time of trouble," I said to him, "here is at last a day of real happiness."

"Yes, and we shall never forget her who brings it."

"Ah!" exclaimed Manon. "You are both good men. One of you is just as good as the other."

"He is the better," I said, pointing to Loiseau. "If you knew all that he has done for me!"

And I told them, the best I could. Zephire seized Loiseau's hand and kissed it. My honest friend was too tender-hearted to resist this touching demonstration. He burst into tears.

"Mademoiselle," he said to my sweetheart, "realize that your lover was formerly the happiest of men; that he was so unfortunate as to lose this happiness by the death of a celestial creature. Try, beautiful Zephire, to be as worthy by your morals as you are by your tenderness, of him who was the friend of the virtuous Madame Paragon!"

I cried out at this.

"Pardon," said Loiseau to me, "but her name can never be out of the way."

I threw myself into his arms, then into those of Zephire, saying, "And here is my only consolation. Oh my darling, you do console me . . . for all my misfortunes!"

My sweetheart pressed me in her arms. Manon herself was enchanted. Loiseau could not recover from his astonishment that two such women should thus partake of our pleasures of the heart!

Supper over, Zephire said to Loiseau, "I hope that you will be so kind as to escort my sister home? For it is late, and she runs a good deal of risk; if some libertine were to attack her, out of meanness, the Guard would *take* her."

These words appeared to mortify Loiseau, who for awhile had been deluded by the honest speech and conduct of the two sisters. He recovered himself, saying, "Yet it is her very naiveté which recalls what one would otherwise forget."

Loiseau and Manon went out, and as his way home would lead him past my door he promised to look in on us again and say goodnight.

The host came up to tell us that he was about to close. I took care to appear as ill as I had been during the day, so as not to arouse scruples in the good man.

We were alone at last, my sweetheart and I.

"My dear," she said the next morning, when I was thanking her for her many kindnesses, "does your right hand thank your left hand for its services?"

This conversation was interrupted by my host. Zephire was almost dressed. He opened the door, the key having remained in the lock. He brought me my soup. My young sweetheart presented it to me. She told him to make some coffee with cream.

She asked me if—Loiseau being engaged—I did not have, among my acquaintances, a good boy like him and me for her sister Manon. I had an idea which made me laugh.

"Yes, I have a friend who would have been my brother by one of my sisters if it had de-

pended on him and me. He shall be my brother-in-law by your sister Manon."

She seemed transported with joy.

"Your friends are my family. Oh how happy we shall be together!"

I was agitated by a host of ideas. It seemed to me that I had just recovered that nobility of sentiments which Madame Paragon had given me, that purity of soul which I had had in loving Jeannette Rousseau. I felt that I owed it to Zephire, and that it was a benefit greater than the saving of my life.

My sweetheart returned. She was gay, happy. She rolled my hair which then was chestnut, curly, and very beautiful. She frizzed me, herself.

Her breakfast came. We took it together. Loiseau appeared. There was a cup for him. Seeing me well, he ran to work.

Although it was in December, the weather was mild and fine. We went down on the quai des Orfevres. Nature gave the world a cloudless sky, expressly for us. Zephire without rouge looked like a young virgin. Her sweet tender gaze expressed only the goodness of her heart. Something which I had noticed more than once was that she considered her profession legitimate. I said to her, "Sweetheart, I should not like for anyone to recognize us here. Who would know that I am with virtue itself?"

"What difference would that make, my darling?"

I had not yet endeavored to enlighten Zephire, both because I thought her too young to understand me and I feared to render her un-

happy in vain. Her conduct, when she quitted me for the old man, had appeared the effect of habit. Not so. It was, in Zephire, devotion to her profession and what she considered her duty. The innocent child thought, "Each has his profession. This is my own. I must labor in it."

Under the appearance of vice my Zephire had in her heart only resignation and obedience to her mother.

Our promenade on the quai des Orfevres completed my knowledge of the soul of Zephire, and it was from then that I loved her with that burning passion, equal to that which Jeannette Rousseau had inspired in me, even to that inspired by Madame Paragon. Zephire was the third part of this composite, my single passion. I felt the force of my attachment as we went upstairs to my place. Her pretty waist, her beautiful blond tresses, her voice, her lively manner ravished me! But the idea, *she will quit me soon for* . . . This thought made me heave a dolorous sigh. We were on the second floor. She turned around.

"You sighed?"

"Ah, Zephire, I adore you! You have no idea how much you have meant to me this last hour."

"This last hour!—But here is where we enter, my darling."

She opened a door. The fruitseller-billsticker-porter was finishing the rearrangement of a room.

"It is my best chamber," he said to us.

So, instead of my garret I had the best chamber of my host. But I regretted my attic

room, papered with playbills, and if I had not been receiving this new habitation from my Zephire I would have refused it.

"Why this last hour?" she continued.

"Because in this last hour I have learned to know you perfectly."

"But you love me?"

"I adore you."

"Is that more?"

"Yes, adoration is the perfection of love."

"Ah, how happy I am to be adored by you!"

"If you want me to be happy also, my Zephire, we must be inseparable."

"That is what I ask. I am your wife."

"You must no longer follow your profession."

"All right. I do not like it so very well. But you are not rich?"

"Oh, my tender sweetheart! the fatal words, 'I am poor,' never lacerated my heart until now since I have come to know you. But you must quit your profession. You must, absolutely."

It was noon Zephire heard somebody coming up the stair. She ran to open our door. It was Loiseau.

"Don't go upstairs," she said to him. "He lives here, now."

"I come to dine with you, my friends."

"We were waiting for you," Zephire answered.

Then I took Loiseau's hand and said to him, pointing to Zephire, "Do you see this child? Eleonore, Adelaide, and Stanislette"—the three

pupils of Mademoiselle Zoe, the daughters of the violin of the Opera—"are not more innocent, are not more pure."

And I detailed to him, before Zephire, the sentiments of this admirable child. The soul of Loiseau expanded as he listened to me, his face was a-glow. When I had finished, he said, "You must be a privileged creature. Heaven performs these miracles only for you. Oh, friend of Madame Paragon, and I know to what degree you were her friend, how is it that you find another phenomenon, after having lost the prodigy of beauty, of virtue, of generosity? I am no longer astonished that my soul has become attached to yours. I did not understand the cause of the violent attraction which carried me toward you. It is because you are a privileged creature."

He interrogated Zephire, himself, but prudently, and with that decency which was natural to him. The naive responses of the lovely girl convinced him.

"Oh, my friend," he said to me, "Oh, beautiful Zephire! You are not, then, vicious, either one of you, and I can honor you, esteem you, without a feeling of revulsion."

Loiseau and I then instructed Zephire as to the infamy of her profession, showing her that vice was inseparable from it, however legitimate she might regard it. She shuddered, and asked me, "What must I do, my darling?"

"Enter some woman's trade as apprentice," I answered. "Nature and love have destined you to be mine one day. In the face of Heaven, in the presence of my dear Loiseau whose friendship is sacred to me, I swear to you that

you shall be my wife. But before that, a retirement of some years must make your pretty face forgotten, so that your husband shall not be humiliated by the insolent smile of another man."

Zephire consented to do everything, with a promptness and a confidence which showed how much she was devoted to me. The obstacle was that we had no money except hers. My illness had completely exhausted us. We owed Renaud, Boudard, Mademoiselle Zoe. But Zephire had cured me, and I resolved to go to work next day.

We set aside three fourths of the sum which she had brought me, then Loiseau ran to Mademoiselle Delaporte's to get her advice and to bring her to dinner with us.

Zephire did not belie the eulogies of Loiseau. We dined; then, sufficiently instructed, Mademoiselle Zoe, on the arm of Loiseau, went to speak to a milliner whom she knew in the corner of the rue de Savoie and the rue des Grands-Augustins—the place is occupied today by a wigmaker. She proposed Zephire as an apprentice, making a few explanations, of which the young girl's condition was one. The milliner refused, but, on the insistence of Mademoiselle Delaporte, consented to see the girl.

They returned immediately to take us to the shop. Zephire had put on a little linen dress, which she had sent to her mother's for. In this grisette costume she was even prettier than usual. The sight of her, in spite of everything that was known of her, removed all uncertainties. The shopwife and the girls regarded her with admiration.

"It is a fairy enchantress that you bring us!" said Madame Guisland.

We told her that I was the promised bridegroom.

"In that case," she answered, "everything is arranged. For never will this young man cease to love so charming a person."

We concluded the bargain at six hundred francs for three years, and we wished absolutely to give it in advance.

But now it was a matter of speaking to the mother, so as to get Zephire's trunk and clothes. Loiseau addressed himself first to Manon. He disguised nothing, told her that her sister wished to be honest, that one day she should be my wife; he detailed to her the reasons necessitating a change of profession which should precede the marriage by a good many years.

Manon began to cry, saying that Zephire was very lucky. She went, all in tears, to find her aunt, whom she called her Mamma, and brought her to Loiseau. He explained the motives for the request. He was prepared for the most violent assault, thinking that a woman of this kind, at the mere mention of restoring her daughter to honor, was going to devour him. But Zephire's mother softened. She asked only that somebody be responsible to her for the marriage. At once she handed over Zephire's wardrobe, and even what money was due her. She wanted Manon to go back and make her sister a thousand signs of friendship on the part of her mother. Loiseau was in a sort of ecstasy of wonder.

"I am very glad," the mother added, "that

my delicate Zephire escapes the wretched profession I put her into by weakness for that . . . Maret . . . who got six francs a customer. . . . All I desire is that she be an honest woman one day. . ."

At what Manon told her, she trembled with joy.

"Oh, the poor child; she does well to quit. . . She is very dear to me. . . Oh, what a consolation if I see my daughter married, esteemed, and having children!"